

DASHED HOPES: ANTI-ISRAEL BIAS AT THE UN



**“ I’M GETTING PAID TO BE WORRIED.
ALMOST EVERY DAY I WAKE UP AND SEE
AN EMAIL OR A TEXT MESSAGE ABOUT
SOMETHING HAPPENING AT THE UN
AGAINST ISRAEL. ”**

DANNY DANON, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS (2015-2020)

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THE UN CHARTER CALLS FOR THE
“EQUAL RIGHTS OF MEN AND WOMEN
AND OF NATIONS LARGE AND
SMALL.” SADLY, INSTITUTIONALIZED
ANTI-ISRAEL BIAS HAS THUS FAR
PREVENTED THE WORLD BODY FROM
LIVING UP TO THIS NOBLE VISION.

ISRAEL AS SECOND-CLASS UN CITIZEN

EVEN THOUGH ARTICLE 2 OF THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) CHARTER states that “the Organization is based on the principle of equal sovereignty of all its Members,” Israel doesn’t receive equal treatment. The world body’s three most recent secretaries-general have admitted as much. Kofi Annan noted in 2006 that “supporters of Israel feel that it is harshly judged by standards that are not applied to its enemies,” adding, “And too often this is true, particularly in some UN bodies.” His successor, Ban Ki-moon, said in 2016: “During the past ten years, I have argued that we must never accept bias against Israel within UN bodies. Decades of political maneuverings have created a disproportionate volume of resolutions, reports, and conferences criticizing Israel.” And current Secretary-General António Guterres has pledged to do something about it. On April 23, 2017, he called the denial of Israel’s right to exist “a modern form of antisemitism,” and declared: “As secretary-general of the United Nations, I can say that the State of Israel needs to be treated as any other state, with exactly the same rules.”

A PARADOX OF JUSTICE

The irony is startling. On a wall just outside UN headquarters in New York City, there is a quotation from the biblical prophet Isaiah envisioning world peace: “They will break their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift sword against nation, nor shall they learn war anymore.” Created in 1945 in the wake of World War II and the Holocaust to actualize that vision, the UN has become a major sounding board for hatred of the world’s only Jewish state.



THE LATE SENATOR DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN DESCRIBED AS “OBSCENE” THE UN’S ZIONISM-IS-RACISM RESOLUTION, WHICH FOUND ZIONISM TO BE A FORM OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION. FOR 15 YEARS, AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE (AJC) LED THE ULTIMATELY SUCCESSFUL FIGHT TO REVOKE THIS ODIOUS LIE.



CROWDS IN TEL AVIV CELEBRATE THE UN’S VOTE FOR PARTITION IN 1947.

The UN helped create the State of Israel by its 1947 partition resolution that called for dividing Palestine into Jewish and Arab states—a step accepted by the Jews, who proclaimed the independence of Israel the next year, but not by the Arabs, who fought, unsuccessfully, to destroy it. Israel became a member of the UN in 1949.

While the Arab and Muslim worlds remained hostile to Israel, it was not until the 1970s, when the Soviet Union and its satellites turned sharply against Israel, that a UN majority coalesced in opposition to the Jewish state. In 1975, the UN General Assembly, in which all countries are represented, overwhelmingly approved Resolution 3379 declaring Zionism—the founding ideology of Israel, affirming the need for a Jewish state in the historical homeland of the Jewish people—a form of racism. It was not until 1991 that the resolution was revoked, due in part to U.S. influence and as an outcome of that year’s Madrid Peace Conference.

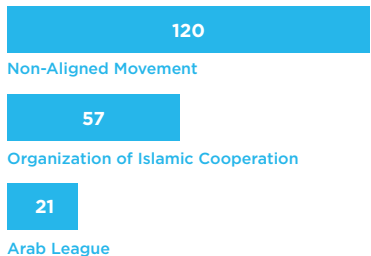
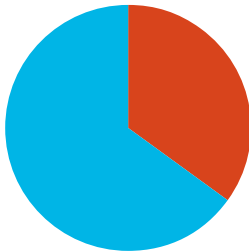
ANTI-ISRAEL BIAS BY THE NUMBERS

BUT EVEN REVOCATION OF THE MENDACIOUS “ZIONISM IS RACISM” resolution did not undo the widespread challenges to Israel’s legitimacy, and a virtually automatic anti-Israel UN majority has remained a constant threat to the Jewish state’s international position. Of the 193 member states of the UN today, 21 belong to the Arab League, 57 to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and 120 to the so-called Non-Aligned Movement, which strongly identifies with the Palestinians. (The movement’s presidency is currently held by Azerbaijan, which took over from Venezuela in 2019. Prior to that, the presidency was held by Iran.) Because of the positions taken by these voting blocs, 65 percent of the nations at the UN feel obligated to vote against Israel. This automatic anti-Israel bias persists despite strong bilateral relations that Israel enjoys with many of these countries. In recent years, Israel has built strong ties to developing nations, many of which belong to the Non-Aligned Movement, through foreign aid and expert assistance on issues such as agriculture and water management. Nevertheless, what the eloquent Israeli diplomat and Ambassador to the UN Abba Eban said years ago remains true today: “If Algeria introduced a resolution declaring that the earth was flat and that Israel had flattened it, it would pass by a vote of 164 to 13 with 26 abstentions.”

THE AUTOMATIC ANTI-ISRAEL MAJORITY

65% of UN Member States belong to anti-Israel voting blocs

3 main anti-Israel voting blocs within the United Nations



In defiance of the UN Charter, which calls on all members to refrain from the threat or use of force against another, at least one member state, Iran, which aspires to achieve nuclear weapon capability, has called repeatedly for the end of the State of Israel, and the UN has taken no formal steps to rebuke it.

IRANIAN MEN BURN AN ISRAELI FLAG DURING A PRO-PALESTINIAN DEMONSTRATION UNDER THE AZADI (FREEDOM) TOWER IN TEHRAN ON MAY 15, 2012.



“This barbaric, wolf-like, and infanticidal regime of Israel, which spares no crime, has no cure but to be annihilated.”
Tweet by Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on November 8, 2014

Shockingly, the number of UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions criticizing Israel far outnumbers those targeting any other member state. Revelation of the utterly disproportionate treatment of Israel sometimes elicits laughter at the UN itself. For instance, as a raft of anti-Israel resolutions was pushed through the General Assembly on November 14, 2013, an interpreter, thinking that her microphone was off, uttered to her colleagues:

“ I THINK WHEN YOU HAVE ... LIKE A TOTAL OF TEN RESOLUTIONS ON ISRAEL AND PALESTINE, THERE’S GOTTA BE SOMETHING, C’EST UN PEU TROP, NON? [IT’S A BIT MUCH, NO?] I MEAN ... THERE’S OTHER REALLY BAD S—T HAPPENING, BUT NO ONE SAYS ANYTHING ABOUT THE OTHER STUFF. ”

But even that indiscrete truth-telling failed to stop the Israel-haters. The next year, at the 2014 session, 20 resolutions denounced Israel and just three were aimed at other nations. In 2015, there were 25 resolutions focused on criticizing Israel. In both 2016 and 2017, Israel was targeted in 20 UNGA resolutions; and in 2018, by 21.

This tilt against Israel carries over to the UN Security Council as well. On December 23, 2016, in the waning days of the Obama Administration, for the first time in eight years, the U.S. declined to use its veto power to prevent the UN Security Council from adopting a biased resolution singling out Israel for condemnation. The current U.S. Administration, however, has vowed to veto any similar resolutions.

The strong anti-Israel bias at the UN has also led to the creation of numerous pro-Palestinian bodies within it that simply do not exist for any other group. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is the only General Assembly committee devoted to a single people. The Division for Palestinian Rights is the only division within the UN Secretariat's Department of Political Affairs devoted to a single people. And the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People is the only committee in the UN's human rights structure devoted to a single people.

Another glaring example of bias is the UN's treatment of refugees. While the UN High Commissioner for Refugees is assigned to handle the needs of all the world's refugees, a separate organization, the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), deals only with Palestinians. And that's not all—those Palestinian refugees are treated differently than all the others. For one thing, while the High Commissioner's portfolio includes "only people who have fled their homeland," UNRWA's definition also includes "the descendants of persons who became refugees in 1948," so that the original 860,000 Palestinian refugees have mushroomed into five million. Also, part of the High Commissioner's mandate is to help resettle refugees, whereas UNRWA leaves its clients stateless, living in camps throughout the Middle East. Indeed, there is strong evidence indicating that UNRWA schools in those camps teach children hatred of Israel.

THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

ANOTHER ARENA OF UN DISCRIMINATION AGAINST

Israel is the world body's Geneva-based Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Established in 2006 to replace the Human Rights Commission, it has only one permanent agenda item targeted at a specific country, Israel. This is Item 7, which deals with the "human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories." In striking contrast, Item 4 covers "human rights situations that require the Council's attention" in the rest of the world. This fixation upon Israel leads to disproportionate condemnation of the Jewish state. Every year, the Council adopts at least five resolutions censuring Israel, while other countries that are subject to Council resolutions—with the exception of Syria since 2011—receive criticism in one annual resolution each. Moreover, unlike other countries scrutinized by the UNHRC, only Israel is subject to monitoring by "experts" until the end of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, rather than to an extendable period of one or two years.

ISRAEL IS THE ONLY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD WITH A SEPARATE— AND PERMANENT— AGENDA ITEM, #7, AT THE GENEVA-BASED UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL. NO OTHER MEMBER STATE, INCLUDING SERIAL HUMAN-RIGHTS VIOLATORS LIKE IRAN, NORTH KOREA, SUDAN, AND SYRIA, IS SINGLED OUT THIS WAY.



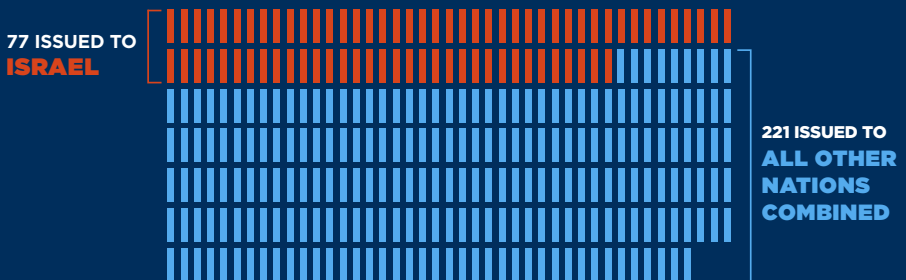
To its great credit, the U.S., in successive administrations, has spoken out eloquently against the UNHRC's treatment of Israel. In March 2013, it sent a letter to the Council's president complaining about "the blatantly unfair treatment that one UN member state receives in this body. The legitimacy of this Council will remain in question as long as one country is unfairly and uniquely singled out under its own agenda item." Over the last few years, the EU has followed the lead of the U.S. and demonstrated opposition to the bias against Israel by refraining from participation in debates under this agenda item.

The hypocrisy of the Council's fixation on Israel becomes even more apparent from a scrutiny of the list of its members. Among the 47 states chosen to enforce the human-rights ideals of the UN are countries widely recognized as abusers of those rights, such as Afghanistan, China, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia.

Israel, the object of their repeated censure, and, unlike them, a Western-style democracy, has never served on the UNHRC, and is unlikely to do so for the foreseeable future.

In June 2018, after its repeated calls to rectify the bias against Israel went unheeded, the U.S. withdrew from the UNHRC.

Total UNHRC Resolutions against countries, 2006-2018



The Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, May 2019

UNESCO—THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION—is a specialized agency of the UN whose mission is to contribute to world peace and security by promoting global collaboration through educational, scientific, and cultural measures. Until the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel and UNESCO maintained good working relations. Regrettably, since that war, neighboring Arab states and the Palestinian leadership have repeatedly used this UN agency as a forum to isolate and censure the Jewish state.

In recent years, these states have persuaded UNESCO to pass several resolutions negating the millennia-old links between the Jewish people and Jerusalem. In October 2016, UNESCO adopted a measure referring to the Temple Mount, Judaism’s holiest site, only by its Arabic name, Haram al-Sharif, ignoring the Jewish people’s connection, which preceded the advent of Islam by more than a thousand years. And again, in May 2017, UNESCO passed a resolution that referred to Israel as an “occupying power” in Jerusalem, denying the Jewish state’s sovereignty over any part of the city.

In the 1990s, the U.S. Congress passed two laws that forbade payment of dues to any international body that grants membership “to any organization or group that does not have the internationally recognized attributes of statehood” (meaning the nonexistent “State of Palestine”). And consequently, in 2011, the U.S. halted payment of its membership dues to UNESCO after it admitted a unilaterally declared Palestinian state as a member.

In January 2019, both the U.S. and Israel withdrew their membership in UNESCO, citing anti-Israel bias.

GEOGRAPHICALLY INCORRECT

MEMBERSHIP ON THE UN'S VARIOUS committees and agencies is allotted by five regional groups of states—Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America-Caribbean, and West Europe and Others (WEOG). Each grouping nominates countries from that region to serve on the various UN bodies, and their choices are then approved by a vote of all UN members. While Israel belongs geographically in the Asia-Pacific category, that group—with its heavy Arab and Muslim representation—does not accept it. Therefore, Israel for many years was the only country unaffiliated with a regional grouping and hence ineligible for membership in a UN body.

There has been some improvement in this situation in recent years. In 2000, WEOG, which represents Western-style democracies irrespective of geography, accepted Israel as a temporary member at UN headquarters in New York, a status that was made automatically renewable in 2004. The WEOG label has enabled Israeli ambassadors to serve twice as vice president of the General Assembly. In 2013, Israel was admitted to WEOG at the UN's Geneva headquarters, but it remains unidentified with a regional group at the UN's other sites in Nairobi, Rome, and Vienna. Israel had submitted its candidacy through WEOG for membership on the Security Council for the 2019-20 term, but ultimately withdrew its bid, when it concluded that in the hostile UN environment it would be unrealistic for the Jewish state to achieve the required two-thirds majority.

“MADELEINE ALBRIGHT AND I PASSED THE AJC AD AROUND THE ROOM OF EUROPEAN UNION MINISTERS—THAT’S HOW IT ALL STARTED.”
RICHARD HOLBROOKE, U.S. PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN (1999-2001)

Countries eligible to sit on the United Nations Security Council:	Countries not eligible to sit on the United Nations Security Council:
Australia	Azerbaijan
Brazil	Brazil
Canada	Canada
France	France
Germany	Germany
India	India
Japan	Japan
Russia	Russia
United States	United States
United Kingdom	United Kingdom
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WHAT CAN BE DONE?

ISRAEL AND ITS ALLIES CONTINUE TO FIGHT BACK AGAINST

overwhelming odds, with some, albeit limited, positive results. In 2015, the UN General Assembly recognized Yom Kippur as an official UN holiday. Then, in the summer of 2016, Israel's ambassador was elected, with the support of 109 countries, as chair of the UNGA's Sixth (Legal) Committee. Also, the Israeli ambassador in Geneva was elected by WEOG to represent the group on a key committee selecting UN special rapporteurs.

There is little reason to think that the automatic anti-Israel majority at the UN will come to an end anytime soon. But there are four concrete steps that the UN can take to provide a more level playing field for the Jewish state:

- 1 • **Eliminate the anomalous UN entities that target only Israel**—the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights, and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People.
- 2 • If it remains politically untenable to dissolve UNRWA and place Palestinian refugees under the aegis of the High Commissioner for Refugees, at least **task UNRWA with resettling the Palestinians** and monitoring its schools so that they do not teach hatred.
- 3 • **Do away with UNHRC Agenda Item 7**, and address charges of Israeli violations of human rights under Item 4, together with like charges brought against other nations.
- 4 • **Grant Israel permanent membership in a UN regional group** at all UN offices around the world.


NOTES

AJC

**American Jewish
Committee**

AJC's mission is to enhance the well-being of the Jewish people and Israel, and to advance human rights and democratic values in the United States and around the world.



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